

## Equity Policy

### Purpose:

Spokane Public Schools (SPS) values its rich, diverse schools and communities and is committed to providing excellence for everyone. In order to actualize this mission, we recognize necessity to identify and change the practices and policies that perpetuate systemic racism and other social maladies that broadens opportunity gaps.

The School Board of Directors recognizes the long history of discrimination in the United States that has led to institutional, structural and individual bias, which is inconsistent with the district's commitment to serving all students. School and community data indicates persistent disparities among students of color and other historically underrepresented students.

In service of a diverse student population, SPS commitment is to honor and value the many customs and traditions present in our community and we are proud to partner with all stakeholders to support mutually beneficial goals.

We are committed to engaging all stakeholders and we believe that our learning and work environments are enriched and improved by the contributions, perspectives and presence of its diverse student body, community, and staff. Everyone deserves a respectful, welcoming, and inclusive learning environment in which their diversity is recognized and valued. It is the right of all students to receive a high quality, equitable education and have a safe social experience in school, and for all employees to work in a safe and inclusive environment.

With the implementation of this policy, Spokane Public Schools shall pursue the following goals:

- Address structural systems with a focus on eliminating barriers and improve access for students.
- Raise the achievement of all students while decreasing gaps between the highest and lowest performing students.
- Decrease rates disproportionality in program, services, interventions, and student discipline

### Objectives:

In order to achieve the aforementioned goals for each student, Spokane Public Schools will focus on the following objectives:

1. **Equitable Access and Outcomes** - Ensure that all students have equitable "barrier-free" access to rigorous content, high leverage teaching practices and

dynamic resources to support high academic, social, emotional and behavioral growth. Data reports will be made available that indicate levels of disparities.

2. **Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment** - Provide staff with professional development and resources to achieve high quality teaching and learning, using culturally responsive practices; and relevant curriculum, teaching and assessment practices, in addition to providing differentiated pathways to academic success.
3. **Hiring and Staffing Practices** - Recruit, hire, support and retain highly qualified diverse and culturally competent administrators, teachers, certificated support personnel and classified staff through broad outreach, inclusive hiring practices and culturally responsive retention strategies that support and value diversity in its staff. Ensure that recruiting, screening, and interview teams are trained and culturally competent to seek out diverse perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds that enrich the makeup of our staff and provide students with inspiring role models. Provide all staff at separation of employment a survey to better understand their experiences related to racial equity. In addition, district leadership shall provide an annual report to the School Board regarding the diversification of the district's work-force.
4. **Professional Learning & Growth** - Facilitate the development of staff capacity and competency to utilize culturally responsive and relevant curriculum, teaching and assessment practices, and discipline methods. This shall include providing staff with consistent and ongoing opportunities to understand the impact of institutional "isms", systemic barriers, and implicit bias. All staff will develop the skills, knowledge and capacity to respond to diverse student needs and backgrounds in culturally appropriate and effective ways. Staff will grow and foster an understanding of pervasive student achievement disparities that have perpetuated inequity, in service of increasing individual and collective cultural competency and humility over time. Pursuant of this objective all staff will receive annual professional development on topics related to anti-racism and culturally responsiveness, and all new employee will receive training during the district new employee orientation process.
5. **Community and Family Engagement** - Cultivate strong partnerships between school and home, between the district and the community agencies and organizations, and across schools to grow in perspective and response to our rich and changing social environment. Work proactively through outreach to elicit a high degree of participation and contribution from students and their families. Ensure diverse community representation in task forces, committees, and events, at the school and district level.
6. **Distribution of Resources** – Engage in data-informed decisions that support the needs-based distribution of resources, supports, facilities and opportunities by

differentiating allocations based on identified needs of a specified individual or group.

7. **Institutional Structures** - Review and remedy practices that perpetuate achievement and opportunity gaps. Reform those structures leading to increased representation of certain groups of students in areas such as assessment, special education, and discipline, and under-representation in programs such as AP classes.
8. **Employee Work Environment** - District procedure will be utilized to outline the expectations for nondiscrimination and the process staff will use when reporting incidents of work-place discrimination. This will include specific timelines and the process for appeals.

### **Governance:**

The responsibility for student success is broadly shared by district staff, administrators, instructors, communities, and families. The district's strategic plan is the district's primary equity plan in order to promote clear communication, coherence, reporting, accountability, and collaboration.

1. The Board of Directors shall use the values stated in this policy as a lens when conducting its business and in exercising its responsibilities within Spokane Public Schools.
2. The Board of Directors and Superintendent shall establish strategies within the district strategic plan to pursue the goals and objectives of this policy.
3. The Board of Directors and Superintendent shall establish in accordance with the district's strategic plan specific measurable outcomes. The Superintendent will provide regular updates regarding progress relative to the identified outcomes in the district's strategic plan.
4. District staff shall, within the parameters of their various duties and responsibilities, comply with and execute such plans as are designed to address the values and directions included in this policy. District staff is further responsible to make such suggestions to the appropriate leadership to improve the ability of the district to reduce the achievement and opportunity gaps that exist.
5. Families and the Community shall be considered partners with the District in its effort to address achievement and opportunity gaps. The Board and Leadership will be intentional about prioritizing outreach to our community in meaningful ways.

6. SPS's Board of Directors, Superintendent and employees will work with students and families to identify and address barriers to achievement and opportunities for academic success.

### **Definitions:**

**Achievement Gap:** any significant and persistent disparity in academic performance or educational attainment between different groups of students. (www.greatschoolspartnership.org)

**Anti-Bias:** An active commitment to challenging prejudice, stereotyping and all forms of discrimination. (Anti-Defamation League, www.ADL.org)

**Cultural Competency:** Cultural competence is having an awareness of one's own cultural identity and views about difference, and the ability to learn and build on the varying cultural and community norms of students and their families. It is the ability to understand the within-group differences that make each student unique, while celebrating the between-group variations that make our country a tapestry. (www.NEA.org)

**Culturally Responsive:** Cultural responsiveness refers to the ability to learn from and relate respectfully to people from your own and other cultures. (National Center for Culturally Responsive Educational Systems, www.nccrest.org)

**Discrimination:** The denial of justice and fair treatment by both individuals and institutions in many arenas, including employment, education, housing, banking and political rights. Discrimination is an action that can follow prejudicial thinking. (Anti-Defamation League ADL.org)

**Disproportionality:** the "overrepresentation" and "under-representation" of a particular population or demographic group relative to the overall student population (National Association for Bilingual Education, 2002).

**Diversity:** All the dimensions of diversity listed below may not have correlation data due to privacy laws. The following list is not all inclusive, and the policy calls for annual updates.

Age	Citizenship Status
Color	Creed or Religion
Culture	Economic Status
Family Structure	Gender Identity or Expression
Language Accessibility	Marital/Relationship Status
Mental and Physical Ability	National Origin
Pregnancy	Race
Sex	Sexual Orientation
Veteran Status	

Any other protected class identified in Federal, State or local laws.

**Equity:** Equity in education is achieved when all students receive the resources they need so they graduate prepared for success after high school. (www.CENTERFORPUBLICEDUCATION.org)

**Implicit Bias:** The unconscious attitudes, stereotypes and unintentional actions (positive or negative) towards members of a group merely because of their membership in that group. These associations develop over the course of a lifetime beginning at a very early age through exposure to direct and indirect messages. When people are acting out of their implicit bias, they are not even aware that their actions are biased. In fact, those biases may be in direct conflict with a person's explicit beliefs and values. (Anti-Defamation League, [www.ADL.org](http://www.ADL.org) )

**Institutional Racism:** Institutional racism refers specifically to the ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. The institutional policies may never mention any racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color. (Source: [www.racialequitytools.org](http://www.racialequitytools.org))

**Opportunity Gap:** Opportunity gaps occur because students of color and low-income children often have fewer opportunities to prepare and develop as young learners, due to reduced access to high-quality child care, pre-K, afterschool, and extracurricular activities. These gaps generally persist into their K-12 education, creating achievement gaps, a decades-old issue facing every state. (National Conference of State Legislatures, <http://www.ncsl.org/research/education/equity-and-the-opportunity-gap.aspx>).

**Race:** A social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on characteristics such as physical appearance (particularly color), ancestral heritage, cultural affiliation, cultural history, ethnic classification, and the social, economic, and political needs of a society at a given period of time. Racial categories subsume ethnic groups. (Source: Maurianne Adams, Lee Anne Bell and Pat Griffin, editors. Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice: A Sourcebook. New York: Routledge.)

**Racism:** Is a system of advantage based on race and supported by institutions, policies and practices that benefit dominant groups and disadvantage subdominant groups. Racism is a social expression of power and privilege. (www.NEA.org)